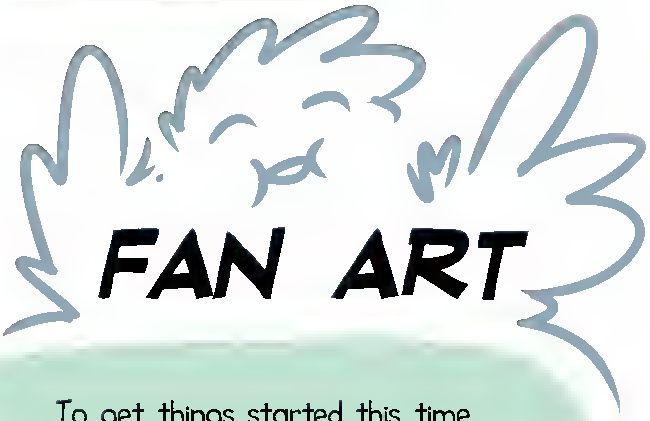
Welcome to our second ever FAN EPISODE!!

Since our first fan edition, we haven't received as much fan art as we'd anticipated, but we did field some impressively shrewd questions!

We can tell you readers are thinking about the Spirits world in ways that we could have only hoped you would! And since so many of you have questions regarding our process, we'll walk you through how we made one of the pages.



FAN ART

To get things started this time around, we'd like to show you the artwork that was submitted to us by two amazing individuals we had the pleasure of meeting at New York Comic Con 2016!!

PANDA
(IG: @PANDASWORK)

&

BRANDON THOMSON
(IG: @B.A_THOMSON)

are an artist/writer duo that are talented, driven, and humble. They stopped at our table in Artist Alley at NYCC and chatted with us for a bit. Bright futures for these two!

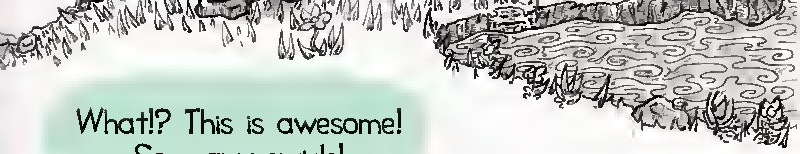
These two pieces were done by Panda.

The first is his depiction of what a lava spirit might look like.

I'm really liking the crackling effect he's got going. And the linework creates some really nice shadows and texture.

I dig it too. Lava isn't something you see every day. I bet this spirit has some profound things to talk about!

This next one is Panda's take on Colin's style when drawing a full scene of spirits in nature.



What!? This is awesome! So many swirls!

This does a great job of contrasting strong graphic elements with rendered figures, something I really love.

Yes! Panda totally gets it. You know, when we met these guys at NYCC, I had a hunch that they were *seers*.

Panda and Brandon are working together on a comic called LittleRoot, that they will eventually be submitting to Webtoons! Keep an eye out!

Unfortunately that's it for fan art submissions today. Hopefully you readers start sending us some more!

I guess that means it's time for the questions!! Here we go...

Q&A

REA-SON KOJE:

"How would you seen Will, if he hadn't been a Seer?"

If I'm understanding the question correctly, Rea-Son is asking how Will might appear to a non-seer while walking around with (and riding!) spirits.

This is a very astute question! It's also one that Will is going to have answered in the very near future, so we're going to allow the answer to come out organically in the story, instead of

addressing it here.
Nevertheless, eXcellent observational curiosity Rea-Son!

VICTORIA GOTCHIE:

"Have any pointers I could use? I would love to draw like you guys :)"

Colin is definitely going to have to field this one. *This* is pretty much the eXtent of my drawing ability:

Draw a lot. Hate your drawings just enough that you're never satisfied, but love them enough to keep going. Look at drawings that you love and try to draw in that style, don't try to draw that drawing, try to mimic that style. Then look at different drawings, and try to mimic those styles. The more styles you try to mimic the more you'll be able to formulate your own style. Also, the more drawings you look at, the more you'll hate your own drawings, but the more you're able to pull pieces and mimic those, the more you'll love your own. It's a constant struggle, but that is the life of an artist.

ASHLEY FRANCO:

"This comic seems almost like a dream. So did this story come to you in a dream? Or did you get parts of the story from Native American folklore?"

-SIMILAR-

CAPTINCRUNCHEE:

"Is this comic based off the African belief of animism?"

The story actually came from an idea that was delicately and deliberately planted

within a dream inside Colin's head, by none other than Leonardo DaVinci!

You mean DiCoprio. And that didn't happen.

Uh, you sure? The kid in 3rd Rock from the Sun was there too.

Yes. You definitely fell asleep watching Inception... again.

Pshh, can ya blame me?

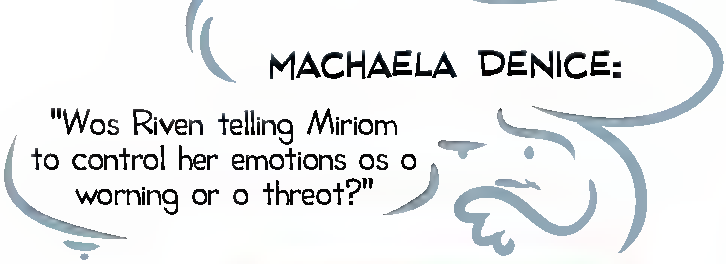
Well, to answer the first question, no, it didn't come from a dream. Although at first, we did toy around with the story being a dream but ultimately felt stories of that nature are told all too often.

Spirits is very much based on animism. When formulating the story we looked at many different beliefs from past to present, including those of Native Americans and Africans. We even looked at

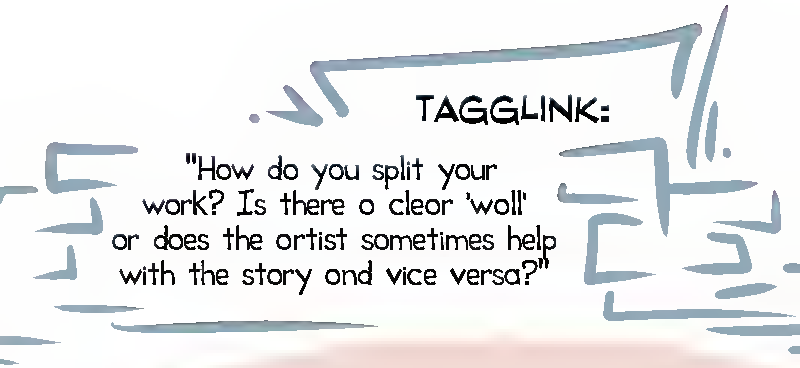
many of the polytheistic religions. Slowly we began to notice a strong and underlying belief: the world and all of its many pieces are alive. It also seemed innately human to explain the inner workings of the world with stories of personifying elements. Even in our culture now, there are a plethora of stories with talking animals, plants, vehicles, toys, even appliances.

The brave, little ones are my favorite!

In abstract ways all of these things communicate with us, however, we desire a human connection. And so the things that fill our world, fill our stories. Spirits aims to not only embody the oldest beliefs of humankind but to also satisfy the age old desire to hear the voice and story of the typically unheard.



Greot question! I'm not sure Miriom even knows the onswer to that one. Only time will tell...



Colin ond I currently work out of o room on the first floor of o house we rent in Portlond, Oreoon. There isn't o woll

between us, but there is a space heater because the house is cold and drafty.

It seems like "Tagglink" is interested in knowing more about the overall process of making Spirits. In fact, many more of the questions we received relate to production:

YEEXE: "How have you been coming up with this whole storyline thus far? Are you writing it as you go or has it been written for a while?"

FIREFLYE: "What brush do you use to make the spirits, like the one today, appear wispy?"

YEEXE: "What's your full coloring process?"

C1CC1O: "Please could you post an image from draft to its final version?"

MAKING OF

The storyline is something we started building years and years ago. The major story arcs for the series and for the first book have been in place for quite some time, as have many of the smaller networks of plotlines. It's a lot easier to construct bridges when you know where they end. Thus, the subsequent scripting is a much more seamless process for us, and we actually tend to craft it as we go. Essentially, we take this large mold of plot and concept that we've already slapped together, and we gradually carve it into a more finely tellable tale.

Let's start with an eXample from an older version of the script. These pages eventually evolved into part of Episode 18 on Webtoons.

Original Script:

Example Page 1a:

1: Will ahead of Norah, both are climbing up rocks.
WILL: I don't think you know where you're going. Why are we climbing up a mountain?
2: Closer on Will.
WILL: Ya know lighthouses are near oceans?

Example Page 2a:

1: Back view of them both, they approach a cliff at the edge of the woods, hills and other mountains fill the landscape.
WILL: Hmph, no ocean.
2: Norah looking at her own wrist again. Will just beyond her.
WILL: Well, we're obviously lost.
3: Same shot but Norah is looking at the sky, wrist still out.
WILL: I'm in the middle of the woods, my brother is a zombie, dark spirits want to eat my soul, and I'm being led around by a ninja with serious attitude, but no map.
NORAH: I'm looking at the map right now.
4: Will obviously not listening, still ranting.
WILL: Best. Day. Ever.

These pages were written in early 2015, and you'll notice that much of the dialogue and action has changed between then and now. That base slab of plot I referred to earlier would be the action of Norah leading Will through the woods, and arriving at a cliff where Lux's lighthouse appears in accordance with Norah's perfect timing. We knew this to be something we wanted from the very beginning.

Let's take a look at what has changed:

Example Page 1b:

1: Wide shot. Norah standing near edge of a cliff at the edge of the woods, looking up at the sky. Will, sitting, looking up at Norah. His backpack is on the ground in front of him, and his arm is elbow deep inside it. Tan is sitting close to Will, looking directly at him. Hills and mountains fill the landscape. It's daybreak.
WILL: Well, we're obviously lost.
2: Will and Tan. Will pulls out a sandwich from the bag. Tan's eyes are wide and his mouth is wide open.

WILL: Lighthouses are supposed to be near oceans.
You know that right?

Example Page 2b:

1: Norah in foreground, looking at the sky. Will & Tan in background again. Tan snatches the sandwich out of Will's hand. Will looks shocked.
NORAH(quietly): Almost time..
2: Shot of Will, shouting.
WILL: HEY!
That was my sandwich!
3: Shot of Will being dramatic.
WILL: Now I'm gonna starve to death!
4: Norah snaps around at Will.
NORAH: What did I say before?
5: Will dismissing Norah.
WILL: I know, I know.
You need your ninja senses.
But I need my sandwiches!
NORAH(OC): It's here.

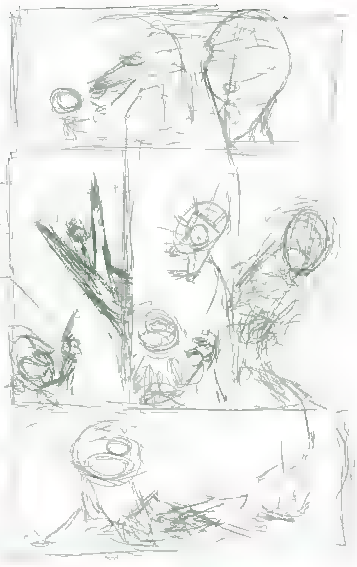
First, we gave Will a more tangibly relatable conflict to complain about- everybody gets hangry! We also realized we could make him equally as dramatic with far fewer words. The most obvious change, however- we created Tan! He wasn't originally in the script, and I think we can all agree he was a good addition to the cast. We also ditched the idea of Norah having some weird, magical map within the skin on her wrist. We liked the concept a lot at first, but in writing it is crucial to not remain too attached to any one idea or direction. The wrist map didn't make a lot of sense, and we ultimately remembered that Spirits is at its core an explanation of our actual, living world. To throw inexplicable magic into the story would do more harm than good.

With these scripts, one of the two of us will begin the writing process and pump out as many pages as our creative flow will allow. When I write, the genesis stages of the pages may be specifically and thoroughly paneled, much like what you see above, or I might leave them a lot more open. When I'm not sure haw something should flow visually, I tend to leave it open for Colin because he's truly gifted with visual direction. From there, the pages then bounce back-&-forth between us both, amending and editing the literature until it's at a point we like. Sometimes this takes days. Often it's more like weeks. But once we're there, Colin begins his wizardry...

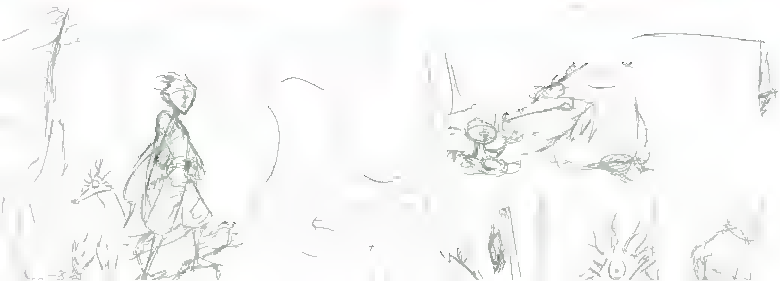
My process for creating the artwork has changed significantly since we first started making Spirits. Originolly I worked entirely on paper for the layout, pencils, inks, and shadows, then moved onto the computer to color and letter. However, I now work exclusively digitally which has provided a myriad of benefits including speed and flexibility. If you were wondering, I'm currently creating on a Wacom MobileStudio Pro in Clip Studio Paint (CPP) for the sketches, pencils, and inks, and in Adobe Photoshop (PS) for the colors.

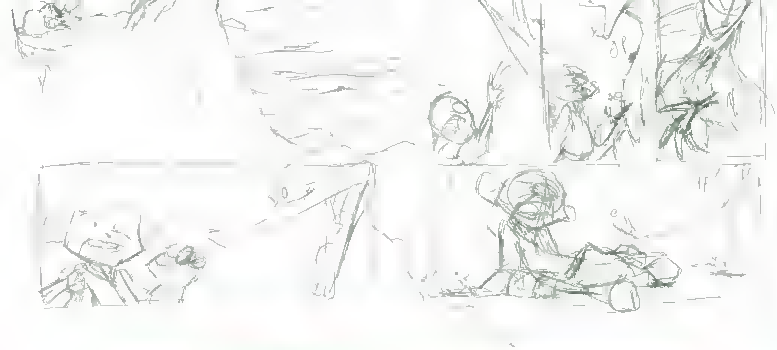
I always start by loosely sketching out the entire chapter, if we have more chapters written I may sketch those out as well. While I try to draw as fast as possible I probably spend a good

deal of time erasing, thinking, and in turn redrawing.



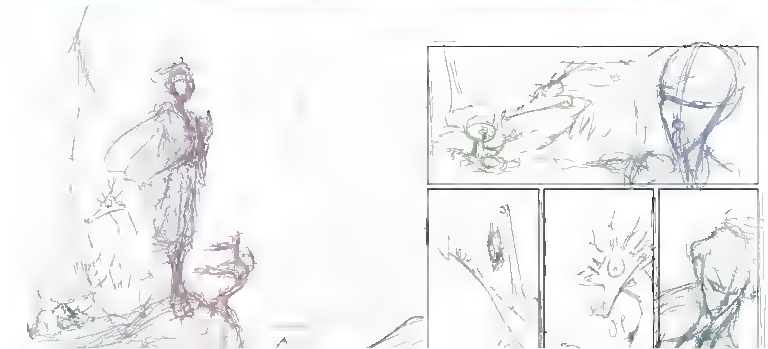
Once I get something I like, this may be after 10 or even 45 minutes. I'll start cleaning up the drawing, either by working in that original layer or by lowering the opacity of the first layer and moving on to another (I like using layers).

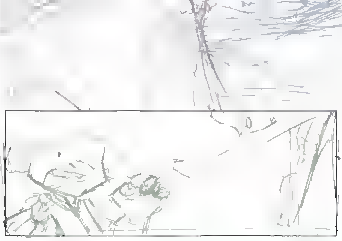


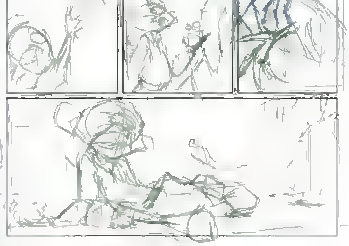


I prefer to get ta something that actually resembles what it will be before maving an. There have been times I've sketched out a page, came back a week later, and can't recognize a single shape I tried ta define.

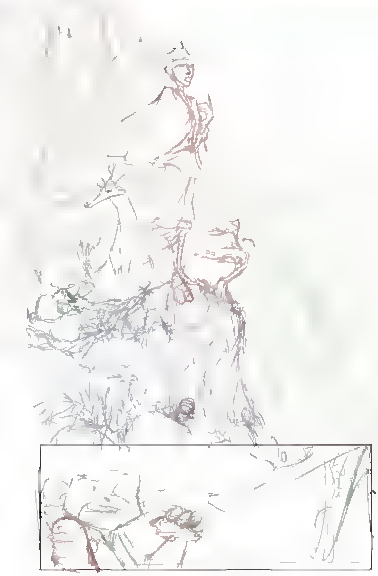
The soaner I can get this part done the better. That way I can step back and look at it with fresh eyes, my preference is at least a week later. Whenever I da, I tend to notice something that wasn't warking exactly right. For these pages, the large panel gave me the mast issues, so I kept redrawing it.

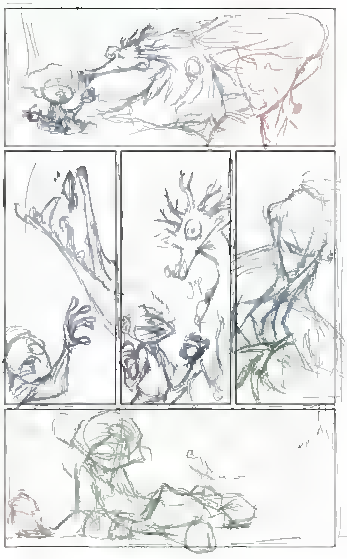






From here I keep refining the "pencils." Some pages and panels end up getting incredibly refined and others not so much. I like the inking stage to still require a bit of thought, which helps with less refinement, however, I don't want to completely make up things when I ink as that often has sloppy results. It's a fine line to balance.





Inking is the most rewarding yet most tedious part. I love long fluid lines with controlled undulation and graceful ease. When I inked on paper, I had to move slowly and precisely otherwise my line would be spastic and chaotic. Digitally, however, I need to move as quickly as possible otherwise my line is shaky and inconsistent. The stabilization on the brushes in CPP helps out tremendously with this.

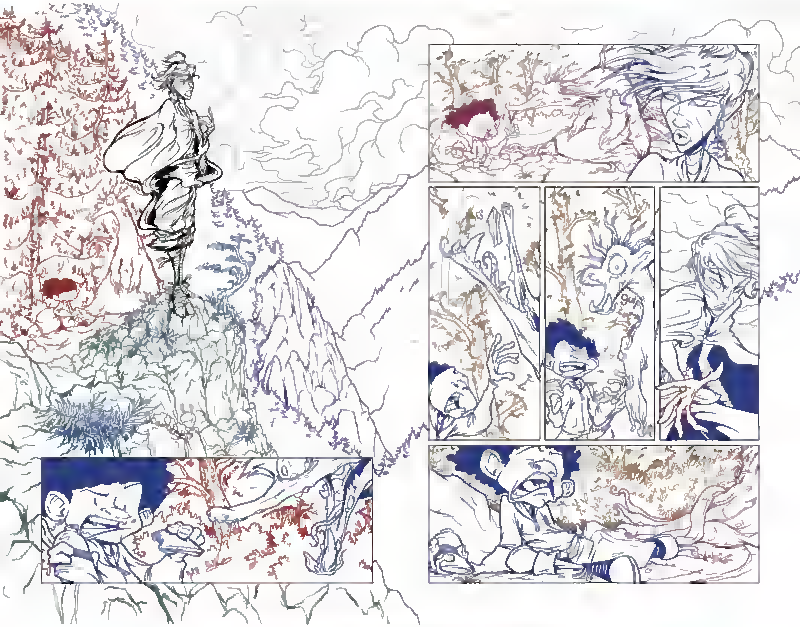
One thing to note: I work with what I call absolute pixels. When I draw a black line, if you zoom in you'll notice that the pixels that make it are only black, no funny grey business. It's a hard line, and to achieve this in CPP I don't use anti-alias with any of my brushes, in PS I only use the pencil tool. In fact, I never use anti-alias for artwork, it has created more

problems than benefits for me.

In order to use obsolute pixels I must work in o higher resolution thon the intended resolution. For printing ot 300dpi I work ot 600dpi.

The major benefit of working this woy is thot every color is easily selectoble, moking the entire coloring process tremendously easier. Outside of o few grodients used for lighting or haze effects, I exclusively use obsolute pixels, this includes shadows ond textures.

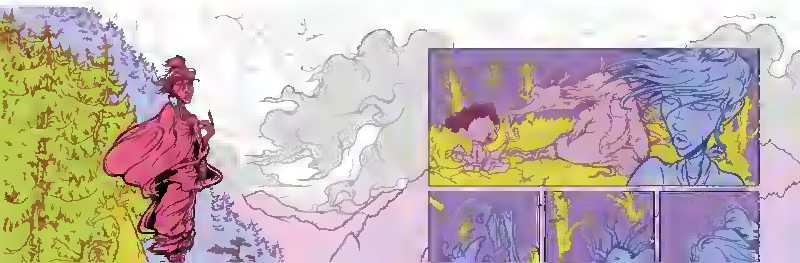
Depending on where they sit on their visual plones (the fore, middle, or background), I ink the charocters, objects, ond environment with different orbitrory colors. This helps with the coloring loter.

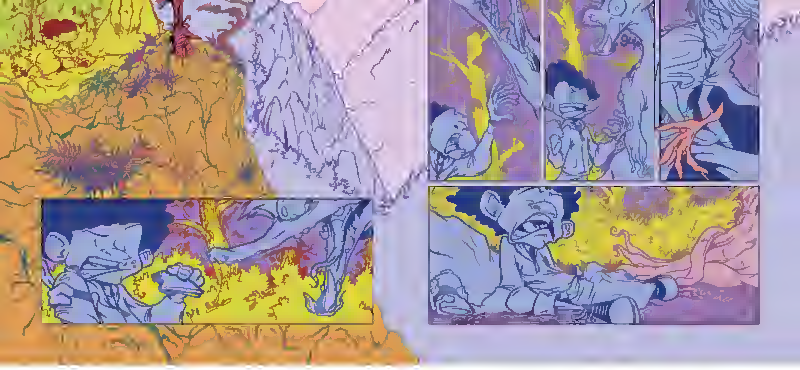


Since we're now moving into colors I switch programs from CPP to PS and hand

the image off to Joe to take care of the flats. Artists, want your writers to get to a feel for how long it takes to make a page, get them to do your flats.

For those that don't know, flats are essentially flat color behind the inked lines. I like two flat layers. The first flat layer I call the isolation layer. The characters, objects, and environments, are isolated from the other visual planes. If two things share a plane, say they are both in the foreground, they can be one color.

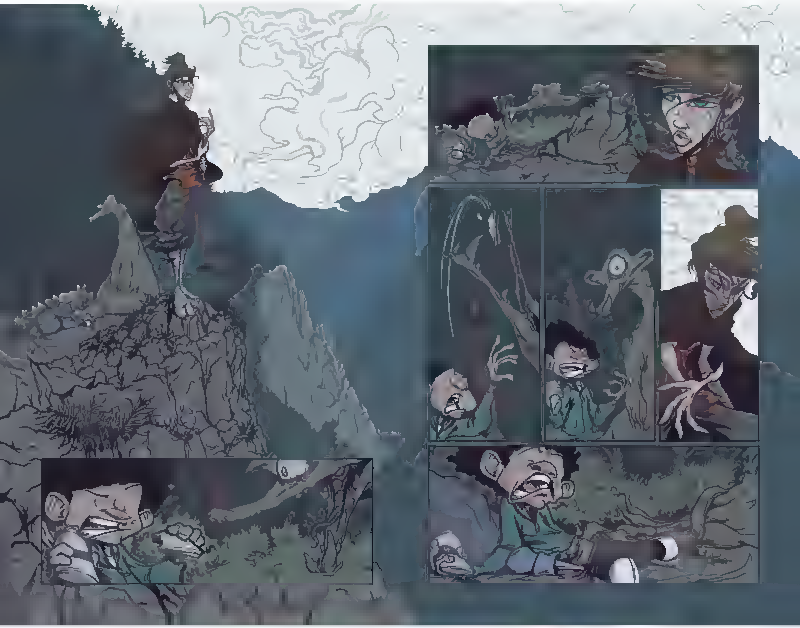




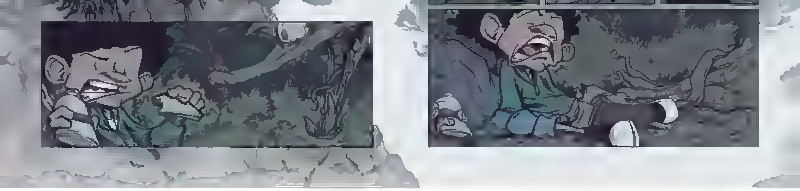
The second flat layer I call the local color layer. It is everything colored as though they are all under a neutral light. For all the characters we have swatches we use to keep the coloring consistent. Joe hands it back to me at this point, where I may tinker with the colors a bit. I'll also color the inks so that they're better suited for the page.

Next I'll start on shadows. I've got a specific brush I use, which is a little textured (again, I use the pencil tool). I'll also

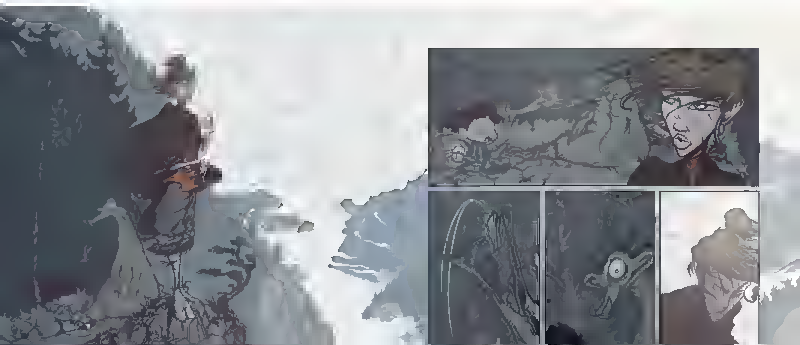
throw on an adjustment layer or two to get the right tone and mood of the scene.

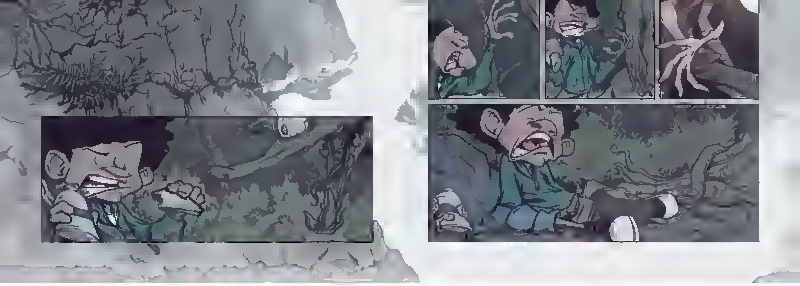


Not all pages get a treatment of clouds, haze, or fog, but this scene did. This took quite while to get right as there were a lot of separate planes to the background to deal with. I ended up drawing the fog a few times. There are many different layers at work, including a massive haze added to further separate the fore and background.



Finally I odd the light loyers. I use o combination of grodients ond brushes on low opacity loyers to hove the charocters either pop from or settle into the environment.





And that's it.

I hope I didn't over simplify
all the steps. Because, it is no short process.
Many long hours are spent on each step.
I'm constantly making minor (or even major)
adjustments here and there. This is why
I like to have dozens of layers to play
with and absolute pixels to easily

select and change. It has taken me years to figure out the techniques that work best for me.

Wow. Well, what more can we say folks? You just got an in-depth, behind-the-scenes, comprehensive look at what it takes to make a couple pages of Spirits!

We're glad yau like the camic enough ta ask these types af questians! Hopefully this episade answered most of them. Either way, keep the questians (and that fan art!!) coming ta:

fanseer@spiritscomic.com.

COLIN LAWLER & JOSEPH GRABOWSKI

Thank you for reading.
We love you.
More episodes to come.
Please subscribe, share, comment,
and if you're also suffering
the cold, stay warm and remember,
it's all about the layers.

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